

PERSONNEL RULES & REGULATIONS MANUAL

SECTION 1300 EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Section 1301. Purpose

The City of Gaithersburg believes that training and development are integral components of work performance and are inherently tied to the City's mission, goals, workforce planning, and the provision of services to the public. The City values the potential of its employees and believes that developing employee potential, through coaching, education and training, and on-the-job training is critical to organizational effectiveness.

It is the responsibility of the Department Head, the supervisor, and the employee, working in partnership, to determine the work goals and training needs for each. Specific training is subject to management approval based on available resources. The program enables the City to fill future positions from within its own ranks and provides for the professional growth of employees.

Section 1302. Training & Development Objectives

The objectives shall be designed and established to achieve the following:

- a. Improve the quality of services provided by the City through its staff.
- b. Improve the quality of performance for each individual employee and the various departments of the City.
- c. Prepare employees for career advancement.
- d. Create a work force with the occupational skills necessary to meet current and future employment needs.
- e. Keep employees current on changing technologies in the workplace.

Section 1303. Training & Development Responsibilities

a. Human Resources Department

The administration of employee training and development falls under the general responsibility of the Human Resources Department, but shall strongly depend on input and cooperation of all Departments.

b. Department Heads

Department Heads shall share in the responsibility for an effective personnel development program. Department Heads will ensure that training and development plans are prepared, updated, and discussed by supervisors and employees as part of the performance evaluation process and are consistent with the mission and needs of the Department.

c. Supervisors

Supervisors have the primary responsibility for initiating communication about training and individual development including but not limited to:

1. Working in partnership with individual employees to assess training needs and coordinate work group and individual employee development plans.
2. Ensuring implementation of employee development plans.

3. Incorporating training and development into the performance evaluation process.

d. **Employees**

City employees have responsibility for initiating discussion to identify and assess their own specific training needs including but not limited to:

1. Working in partnership with supervisors to meet their own training and development needs and those of the work group.
2. City employees may identify, where possible, certain needs related to their individual work experiences which are required to meet all of the performance and advancement criteria which may be defined and established by City management.

Section 1304. Tuition Assistance

1304.1 Purpose

To encourage and support the efforts of City of Gaithersburg employees to obtain skills, knowledge, and abilities that increase the effectiveness of work performance in their present position and improve their career opportunities in the City of Gaithersburg.

1304.2 Eligibility

All classified employees and unclassified management employees of the City are eligible for this benefit. Assistance is not available to employees on probation or in a leave status.

1304.3 Funding Amount

Tuition assistance funds are based on budget allocations and availability. Availability of funds is limited to those budgeted in the fiscal year in which assistance is requested; funds cannot be split between fiscal years. Funds are distributed based on the fiscal year in which the course starts.

1304.4 Criteria

a. An employee who receives tuition assistance must agree to remain employed by the City for a period of at least 24 months following receipt of tuition assistance funds. Any employee who receives tuition assistance and leaves City employment within 12 months of receiving the tuition assistance shall repay to the City all tuition assistance funds they received during the 12 months prior to actual date of termination. Any employee who leaves City employment between 12 and 24 months of receiving the tuition assistance shall repay to the City the pro-rated amount due depending on the number of months remaining before the 24-month commitment is met. The amount of repaid tuition assistance funds may be reduced or waived by the City Manager in the event that the employee is terminated due to a reduction in force.

As a recipient of tuition assistance, the employee authorizes the City to deduct the balance owed for tuition assistance from his/her paycheck or any other final payments due to the employee. The employee understands that, if sufficient funds are not available to satisfy the tuition assistance owed to the City, the employee will pay the balance owed to the City by personal check, cash, or money order on or before their final workday. The tuition assistance does not have to be repaid if the employee dies or is considered disabled under the City's long-term disability insurance program.

b. The employee and the Department Head must be able to demonstrate that the course work is:

1. Directly related to the employee's current City work or normal career progression; or
2. Part of a degree program or curriculum that is City job related; or
3. Directly supportive or improves skills required for current job assignments, duties, or responsibilities that are a condition of continued employment; or

4. Required by law or regulation.

Course work that does not qualify for tuition assistance as job-related under the criteria above may be approved by the City Manager if it is to prepare the employee to make a career change within the City. This approval must be in writing and be obtained prior to registration or payment for any course.

- c. The course work must allow the employee to:
 1. Obtain education or training towards a certificate, associate degree, undergraduate degree, or graduate degree (higher education institutions must be fully accredited); or
 2. Take a credit or non-credit course or seminar; or
 3. Complete a GED program (limited to two tests per employee).
- d. Tuition Assistance funds may be used for training or education offered by one of the following public or private organizations where the primary purpose is educational:
 1. College or university; or
 2. Vocational or business school; or
 3. Professional, scientific, or technical institute; or
 4. An agency or business that offers courses or training.
- e. The following do not qualify for tuition assistance:
 1. Auditing of a course; or
 2. Credit courses taken on an audit basis (e.g., no grade); or
 3. Exams given to receive credit for work life experience; or
 4. Courses or classes that are self-paced or that are open-ended; or
 5. Courses or classes for which a letter grade or pass/fail grade is not earned; or
 6. Books, manuals, software, supplies, etc., required for the course or any other materials and items that may be used outside of the class (calculators, computers, etc.); or
 7. Application fees or other extra fees such as late registration, library book returns, parking, travel, food, lodging, and other costs incidental to the credit courses.

1304.5 Course Completion/Submission of Grades

Successful completion of a course is a grade equivalent of a "C" or better in each undergraduate course and grade equivalent of a "B" or better for each graduate course. In circumstances where pass/fail is the only grading system used, a pass grade must be earned.

Employees must submit a grade report to the Human Resources Department within 30 days of course completion to verify the grade received. If the grade report indicates that the employee has not successfully completed the course as defined above, **the employee must reimburse the City for the full amount of the tuition assistance funds received for the applicable course.** Funds may be repaid by cash or check made payable to the City of Gaithersburg or through payroll deduction.

If the employee fails to provide the grade report within 30 days of course completion, the Human Resources Department will send one written reminder to the employee that the grade report must be submitted immediately. If the employee does not provide the grade report within five business days after the date of the written reminder, the full amount of the tuition assistance funds received for the applicable course will be deducted from the employee's paycheck, the employee's eligibility to receive tuition assistance benefits will be suspended for up to one year, and the employee may be subject to further disciplinary action.

Classes must be taken during off-duty hours or during periods of approved leave. No compensatory leave accrual or overtime compensation will be granted for courses taken in off-duty hours.

The employee's department is responsible for maintaining tuition assistance records on each employee who uses the program, including information on what courses were taken, dates of courses, costs of tuition, and completion of courses.

1304.6 Dropped Courses

Employees who drop a course are required to notify Human Resources within 10 days of dropping the course and must reimburse the City for any tuition assistance paid **within 30 days of dropping the course**. Failure to do so will result in payroll deduction and suspension of tuition assistance benefits for up to one year. Failure to adhere to the terms of this policy may subject the employee to disciplinary action.

In the event that a class is canceled or rescheduled, an alternate class may be selected. The employee must repeat the approval process within two weeks after the course start date.

1304.7 Procedures

a. How to Apply

The Tuition Assistance Program Application must be completed prior to course registration to determine if the expenses for the class are eligible for reimbursement. These submissions must be received by the Department Head within a reasonable period prior to the day the class starts. Failure to submit the request in a timely manner may cause it to be denied at the discretion of the Department Head. The City will not pay late fees.

b. Steps for Approval

1. Requests for tuition assistance submitted after the course has been completed may not be approved for reimbursement at the discretion of the Department Head. Prior to course registration, the employee completes Section I of the Tuition Assistance Application Form and submits it to the Department Head for approval (Section II).

2. The Department Head reviews the request to determine need, job relatedness, and funding availability. If approved, the Department Head completes Section II of the Tuition Assistance Form and forwards the original to the Human Resources Department. If the Department Head disapproves, the Form is returned to the requesting employee.

3. The Human Resources Director or his/her designee reviews the form for job relatedness and compliance with policy, and determines availability of funds. If approved, the original will remain in the Human Resources Department, a copy is returned to the Department Head, and the employee is authorized to register for the course.

1304.8 Steps for Payment

After tuition assistance has been approved, the employee may request payment for the course in one of two ways: (a) payment advance; or (b) payment reimbursement. The employee should follow the steps for the preferred method of payment as outlined below.

a. **Payment Advance**

To request an advance of tuition for the course:

1. Employee completes and submits completed Tuition Assistance Program Application for Department approval.
2. Employee submits approved request to Human Resources.
3. Human Resources forwards copy of the approved request to the Finance Department for issuance of tuition assistance check.
4. Tuition assistance check is forwarded to the employee; employee registers, pays for, and attends the course.
5. Within 10 days after receipt of tuition assistance check, employee must forward the paid tuition bill along with the course description, fee schedule from the course catalog, and the original receipts verifying payment of assistance amount requested to the Human Resources Department. Receipts must include employee's name and must provide a detailed proof of payment (itemized receipt, credit card statement, contract, etc.).
6. Within 30 days after completion of the course, the employee must submit a grade report to the Human Resources Department to verify that the employee satisfactorily completed the course with a grade of "C" or better for undergraduate courses and a grade of "B" or better for graduate courses. If the grade transcript indicates that the employee did not satisfactorily complete the course, the employee must reimburse the City in full. Any grade that is failing, incomplete, or withdrawn will not be considered as successful completion.

b. **Payment Reimbursement**

To request reimbursement of tuition for the course:

1. The employee registers, pays for the course with his/her personal funds, and attends the course.
2. Employee completes and submits completed Tuition Assistance Program Application for Department approval.
3. Employee submits the approved Tuition Assistance Program Application, the grade report for the course completed, and the paid tuition bill along with the course description, fee schedule from the course catalog, and the original receipts verifying payment of assistance amount requested to the Human Resources Department. Receipts must include employee's name and must provide a detailed proof of payment (itemized receipt, credit card statement, contract, etc.).
4. Human Resources verifies the documentation and forwards to the Finance Department for issuance of a reimbursement check.
5. Finance Department forwards check to employee.

Section 1305. Certification Examinations

The City will pay expenses incurred for maintaining required certifications and licensures. The City may pay for initial certifications and licensures as recommended by the supervisor and approved by the Department Head. Expenses may include registration, lodging, travel, and testing on City time.

The Department Head will review requests for initial examination expenses and, if deemed appropriate, will approve City payment of expenses incurred in obtaining the certification.

The City will pay only for expenses incurred relative to the first examination of any specific certification which is applicable to the employee's position within the City's organizational structure. If the employee fails the test on his/her first attempt, all expenses related to subsequent testing to receive the certification will be the sole responsibility of the employee.

When the City pays expenses incurred in obtaining specialized job-related certification, the employee will incur an obligation to continue employment with the City for one year from the date of certification completion. If an obligated employee voluntarily resigns from City employment within one year after the end date of the certification completion, the employee will reimburse the City a pro-rated portion of the cost of the certification expenses.